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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to collect data from students and faculty on suggestions for criteria to selectively screen health majors at Towson State College. The study noted the procedures and legal implications for gathering criteria and summarizes its findings. A section discussed the difficulties faced in acceptance of suggestions for screening criteria. Difficulties included entrance grade-average and placement of transfers. The report concluded with a faculty decision to not formalize selective screening criteria for health majors. Instead, prospective students would be informed of placement problems and notified that screening would take place within the classroom grading system. (JS)

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CRITERIA FOR SELECTIVE SCREENING OF HEALTH MAJORS

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Background

Towson State College (T.S.C.) is a suburban college located just outside the northern boundary of Baltimore, Maryland and a one hour drive from Washington, D. C. The major highway systems surrounding Baltimore make it possible for students to travel in all directions (north, south, east, and west) to city schools or rural suburban schools. Towson State College currently has an enrollment of 6,450 day students, 5,000 evening students and 2,000 graduate students.

The Health Science Department at T.S.C. in 1968 consisted of two health majors and 3.5 faculty. In six years it has grown to a size of 170 majors, ten full-time faculty, and five part-time faculty. The department offers degree programs in school health, public health, a combination of school and public health, a Master of Education and a proposed Master of Science.

Many colleges and universities have not yet been faced with the situation of having too many health majors. There are institutions which are only too willing to recruit and train anyone who is interested in the health education field, be it public or school health education. But with the realization that health education is a growing concern among school systems and communities, colleges and universities may find themselves faced with the dilemma of having too many individuals interested in the field and thus being caught short with too few faculty to handle the student load and a too limited course perspective on professional preparation.

Due to the rapidly increasing size of the Health Science Department at Towson State College, screening procedures of health majors needed to be considered for two major reasons. First, field experience positions in student teaching (school health education, and public health field work (public health education) were somewhat limited at the present time in the State of Maryland and in the communities within easy access to the college. Second, the quality of the graduate in health was considered important enough to select majors not only into the program but also select them out of the program at graduation upon completion of certain competencies in both school and public health education.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was to collect data from students and faculty on suggestions for criteria to selectively screen health majors.

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Procedures

The following were the procedures undertaken:

1. The administration, responding to certain departmental faculty members, determined that there was a need for screening procedures in both school and public health based on:

    a. Number of majors/field work placements projected/availability of faculty to provide training.

    b. Continued excellence in graduating majors.

2. The suggestion for the need for screening procedures was presented to the department.

3. A committee was formed to suggest criteria for the selective screening of majors.

4. The committee determined that opinions from the Health Science faculty and students were needed before suggestions for criteria were put before the department for discussion and approval.

5. The committee members determined suggestions for criteria based on the collection of certain information:

    a. Legal implications from the State College admissions standards.

    b. Written screening criteria and procedures already in existence within other departments on the campus.

    c. Competencies expected of student teachers and public health educators.

6. From the information gathered, a questionnaire was developed and administered to 42 student Health majors and 11 Health faculty. Of those who received the questionnaire, 42 student Health majors and 6 faculty responded.

Summary of Findings

The following selected criteria were summarized as being in agreement with two-thirds of the individuals who answered the questionnarie:

1. Formal application into the program should be made by the student for admission at the end of the freshman year or at the completion of 26 hours of completed course work. The completion of the following course work would be required:

    Current Health Problems
    Contemporary General Biology
    General Psychology
    Introduction to Sociology
    Physical Education elective
    Chemistry for Non-Scientists

2. The acceptance of the student would be based upon the student's meeting and completing certain courses (16 hours) with a grade point average of 2.25.

3. Four faculty and two students should comprise the screening committee.

4. Positive attitude, academic record, prerequisites for admission, and successful completion of a medical examination were also criteria which should be used in selecting students into the program.

5. The number of students permitted into the major should be contingent on positions available in public health field work, student teaching, and availability within the faculty to provide this training.

6. It was strongly recommended that there be an upper level screening program which might take place during the 6th semester of course work just prior to the student's field work experiences. The following criteria should be used:

   a. GPA of 2.75 in major course work at the end of the sixth semester.

   b. Passing mark in the two hour comprehensive exam or competency test in School Health.
      Passing mark in the two hour comprehensive exam or competency test in Public Health.
      Passing mark in the three hour comprehensive exam or competency test in Public and School Health.

Discussion

There were some difficulties in the acceptance of the suggestions for criteria for screening.

The grade point average of 2.25 was negated because we would be forced to prove that professionals do measurably better in their jobs as a 2.25 student than those who achieve a 2.0. This could not be proven at this time.

Prerequisite courses were difficult to choose. It was decided that the information from the questionnaire on prerequisite courses did not allow any flexibility for transfers. A suggestion was made as follows: Courses completed by the end of the freshman year or after 26 credits would be

Current Health Problems or equivalent
English Composition
Either General Biology or Chemistry
General Psychology
Sociology
Speech
Physical Education
(Two of the four)
One-third of the general education requirements

Additional suggestions for criteria were positive attitude (which could not be empirically measured) and successful completion of a medical examination (which was already required by the college).

The major difficulty arose in the fair and equitable handling of transfer students. The screening committee had at one time suggested that screening may be necessary at another time to accomodate transfers. If this could have been done at the beginning of the sophomore level, we would be treating transfers equally. However, the department required two basic professional preparation courses (Principles & Practices of Public Health and Introduction to School Health Education) during the sophomore level as prerequisites to other professional preparation courses offered in the department.

If these courses were required for admission into a sophomore screening program, then we might treat entering juniors unfairly. This would delay placement in field work experiences. The only way to resolve this point was to suggest publicizing course prerequisites in the college catalog. It would still be difficult to be fair to those students who had taken all the prerequisites outside of the department but who would be penalized for not taking the professional preparation courses at T.S.C. the semesters they were offered. Students may have to be told in their senior year that because of their delay in completing the program, field work placements may not be available the next year or semester and they may have to postpone graduation. It was decided that we have an obligation to provide the educational program and a moral commitment to warn students about placement situations. Letters were sent to all majors and a statement was to be inserted in the college catalog stating: ".....it may become increasingly difficult to place students in student teaching and/or public health field work. The purpose of this (letter) is to inform you that it may be possible that some students will experience a delay in being placed for student teaching and/or public health field work in future years...it is possible that the number of senior students desiring placement in student teaching or public health field work might be larger than the number of placements available. We want you to be warned about the need for a possible delay in the event that it should happen...In the event that a student cannot be placed during the desired semester, we will do our best to see that the student is placed either the semester following or as soon as is possible."

It was also agreed at this point that the above situation was not too different from what currently existed in departmental policy. In fact, in retrospect, screening criteria decided upon were either already in effect or were unmeasurable. Therefore, we did not need to proceed further to discuss additional criteria.

Conclusions

After considerable discussion, the faculty decided that rather than complicate the redtape of the educational process, they would not formalize criteria for the selective screening of health majors. The following steps were decided upon:

1. A letter to all Health majors would be sent explaining the placement situation.

2. A statement would be inserted in the college catalog explaining the placement situation.

3. Faculty reidentified that we indeed had a screening procedure in existence through the evaluatory process in the classroom.